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ABSTRACT

The concluding conference of the Council for Cultural Cooperation's Project on Foreign Languages is summarized according to the following framework: (1) the aims, the principle themes discussed at the conference, and the general results; (2) the considerations, proposals, and needs that were identified by the conference and the working groups; (3) conclusions and recommendations with regard to language learning in the schools, language learning by migrants and their families, language learning in higher, further and adult education, including multimedia programs, and initial and further teacher training; and (4) the implications of the Modern Languages Project Report and its own deliberations for the development of modern language teaching and learning in the member European states. The results of each report of the project are applied to an outline for the development of an overall policy, whose broad goals include widespread if not universal multilingualism, second language education from an early age, and a guarantee that all residents, including migrants, will be able to call upon the skills necessary for communication in daily situations. (AMH)

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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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Strasbourg, 20 April 1982

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COUNCIL FOR CULTURAL COOPERATION

CONFERENCE

"Across the threshold towards multilingual Europe -
Vivre le multilinguisme européen"

(Strasbourg, 23 - 26 February 1982)

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This Conference, organised by the CDCC to mark the final phase of Project No. 4 "Modern Languages", had the following aims:

- to present and evaluate the results of the CDCC Modern Languages Project No. 4 and in particular of the case studies and pilot projects in different sectors of education in which the principles and methods developed in the context of the Project have been applied;
- to identify and propose, in the light of the objectives of the Council of Europe, general orientations which might be taken into account in further work to develop the learning and teaching of modern languages;
- on the basis of these orientations, to propose recommendations relevant to the future activities of the Council of Europe in the field of modern languages.

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More than two hundred participants [Ministry senior officials, specialists and teachers, observers from governmental and non-governmental international organisations, and from non-member countries (Canada and Australia)] attended the Conference which was chaired by M. Alain Savary, [French Minister of Education, in the opening session and subsequently by the chairman of the CDCC, M. Raymond Weber. The General Rapporteur was Mr. J.L.M. Trim, Director of the Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research (CILT), United Kingdom.

The participants discussed four main themes of particular relevance to the content and priorities of the new CDCC Project No. 12:

- language learning in schools, introduced by Mr. Rune Bergentoft, National Bureau of Education, Sweden

- language learning by migrants and their families, introduced by Professor Louis Porcher, Director of the Social Sciences Laboratory, Ecole Normale Supérieure de Saint-Cloud, France

- language learning in higher, further and adult education, including multi-media programmes, introduced by Professor J.A. van Ek, University of Groningen, Netherlands

- initial and further training of teachers, introduced by Mr. Christoph Edelhoff, Director of the Centre for the Further Training of Teachers of Hesse, Federal Republic of Germany.

In accordance with the terms of reference given by the CDCC the deliberations of the Conference resulted in

- general conclusions concerning the teaching and learning of modern languages that should influence developments in the field (cf. Section I below)

- advice to the CDCC and to the future Project Group concerning the content and priorities of the new Modern Languages Project No. 12 (cf. Section II below)

- proposals to be submitted to the CDCC (cf. Section III below) with a view to the preparation of a draft Recommendation by the Committee of Ministers to member States (cf. CDCC (82) 27).

The CONFERENCE, having considered the Report Modern Languages: 1971-1981 and

I. having discussed in working groups the general principles on which the Project No. 4 "Modern Languages" of the Council for Cultural Cooperation (CDCC) of the Council of Europe had been based

- accepted the general principles of learner-centred communicative language learning systems development on which Project No. 4 had been based;
- noted that many national and local curriculum development projects were now using features of the approach advocated by the Council of Europe;
- considered that while information about the Project had reached many teachers and educational planners in member countries and many other parts of the world, there was need for an improved information system;
- accepted the importance of establishing, assessing and continuously monitoring the needs, motivations, characteristics and resources of learners, teachers, educational institutions and society;
- considered that the Project had been influential and successful in promoting the pursuit of realistic objectives, in the sense of (a) language in real use and (b) what can be achieved in a given situation. In particular, the concept of the threshold level and the introduction of a functional-notional component into the specification of objectives had proved fruitful. For many educational purposes however it was desirable to strengthen the cultural aspects and take account of the broader cultural, informational and educational needs of the learner;
- considered that the language learning and teaching materials now available, especially to young people, could, and should, be greatly improved;
- considered that effective methods of learning and teaching languages for communication should be promoted, but did not consider that any one method could be regarded as universally valid. Methods are closely related to objectives, but even given the same objectives the different characteristics of learners, teachers and learning situations require considerable variations in method;

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- considered that while the value to society and to individual learners of acquiring a knowledge of a widely spoken language as an aid to personal mobility and access to information is undeniable, it is essential to maintain and make available adequate facilities for the study of all languages of member countries, including those of ethnic minority populations;

- accepted the proposals set out in Chapter 6 of the Report "Modern Languages:1971-1981" as a suitable basis for a further project in modern languages,

- recommended therefore that the CDCC should pay particular attention to the following points:

  1. the need to take cultural and social aspects of language learning into account, in order particularly to break down national stereotypes and assist learners to cross national affective frontiers

  2. the need for language learners to acquire the ability to read authentic written documents with understanding

  3. the need to improve informational aspects of the Project, such as

     a. direct information to teachers, in an accessible language and style of presentation;

     b. an improved framework for two-way exchange of information between the Council of Europe Modern Languages Project and national educational agencies;

     c. improved mechanisms for the exchange of information among those engaged in developing communicative language teaching in the field;

     d. improved methods of communication between the Project and those engaged in relevant linguistic and educational research;

     to achieve this improvement, it is necessary to exploit fully the rapidly developing techniques of information technology;

  4. the need to develop and apply the means of identifying the specific language and educational needs of children, especially in a school setting

  5. the need to develop and extend the specification of language learning objectives in the following ways:

     a. by developing objectives leading to threshold level and beyond, with a broader cultural, informational and educational content;

b. by developing objectives appropriate to a wider range of target groups;

c. by progressively promoting the development of objectives, on the basis of those already produced within the Council of Europe Modern Languages Project, for the remaining national languages of member countries and those of minority groups;

6. the need to promote the creation and publication of materials, based on threshold level specifications, properly designed to support the learning and teaching of languages for communication, and in particular

   a. materials incorporating authentic use of language;

   b. flexible materials usable in an individual mode;

   c. means of coordinating the production and distribution of learning materials which it is not financially profitable to publish;

7. the need, whilst not minimising the inherent difficulty of learning a foreign language in one's own home country, to promote language learning methods which are enjoyable and reflect the learner's wishes

8. the need to develop further the overall assessment framework and instruments for the evaluation of learning programmes and student achievement with a view to

   a. the development and introduction in member countries of forms of evaluation, assessment, testing and examination appropriate to communicative objectives and methodology;

   b. creating and disseminating systems for self-evaluation by learners

9. the need for continuing research into:

   a. practical application by teachers of the approach of the Project;

   b. the processes of language acquisition, learning processes and learning strategies effective in different learning environments.

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II. having further discussed in working groups special themes of particular relevance to the content and priorities of the future CDCC modern languages project No. 12, adopted the following conclusions and recommendations:

A. LANGUAGE LEARNING IN SCHOOLS

1. The CDCC should be aware of the true state of affairs in language teaching in its member States with a view to a more effective application of the principles of the Project at school level.

2. Cultural values should be represented in the study of a modern language from its earliest stage. They should be introduced through the study of the language itself.

3. The new project should give priority to:
   - methodology
   - methods of assessment, particularly in the matter of oral proficiency, on the basis of the work already done in Project No. 4.

4. The CDCC should promote the systematic exchange of teaching materials and should encourage teacher exchange.

5. In Project No. 12, care should be taken to ensure close communication among the pilot experiments with the intention of reaching the definition of a new teaching approach. For this purpose, it is desirable that countries which have not already done so should establish a centre for the exchange of information among modern language teachers.

6. The CDCC should:
   - promote and - if possible - coordinate an exchange of language teaching syllabuses between the various countries;
   - put teachers with special responsibilities in touch with experts working on the Council of Europe Project.

7. There is a danger that the concept of "pupil autonomy" may be misunderstood and may alarm some teachers. "Responsible autonomy" is recognised as an important educational objective and the CDCC should encourage in-depth study of this question.

8. Studies should be made of the relationship between the learning strategies implied by "Un niveau-seuil" and grammatical progression with reference to recent research into "Interlanguage" and into the acquisition of grammar in first and subsequent modern languages.

9. The optimum age for beginning the study of a modern language should be investigated as well as the relationship between learning a modern language and (a) the learning of the mother tongue and (b) the learning of further modern languages.

10. The CDCC should promote agreed criteria for the creation of a system for the evaluation of language proficiency.

11. It is considered that objectives (not all of them necessarily utilitarian) should be diversified, with reference to the different needs of various categories of pupil and to the position of the various languages taught in the countries concerned.

12. One or more levels of reading competence should be developed.

B. LANGUAGE LEARNING BY MIGRANTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

It was considered that Project No. 12 should

1. encourage cooperation between the country of origin and the host country with respect to language teaching and promote projects involving such cooperation;

2. study in detail the relationship between language and culture and its repercussions on teaching;

3. examine the relationship between the education of adults and that of children. Methods and content must obviously be different but it is important never to lose sight of the links to be established between these two components of migrant education;

4. study the conditions and tools necessary for the initial and further training of teachers in the field in question including consideration of ways of assessing the two types of training;

5. help to set up interacting pilot projects and produce compendiums of practical experience based on the methodological principles of the Modern Languages Project;

6. prepare tools for teaching mother tongues;

7. encourage the production of multi-media materials for teaching and training;

8. promote the research into methodology needed to avoid the teaching of the mother tongue and that of the language of the host country being based on diverging principles;

9. develop accessible and reliable instruments for analysing needs (including those in the school sector);

10. develop accessible and reliable instruments in the field of assessment (including self-assessment);

11. suggest materials for learning the languages of the host countries which are adapted to the target groups and which are diversified taking into account the requirements of oral production (intonation, pronunciation, etc.) and the need for becoming aware of the way in which language functions.

C. LANGUAGE LEARNING IN HIGHER, FURTHER AND ADULT EDUCATION, INCLUDING MULTI-MEDIA PROGRAMMES

1. Identification of further objectives for adult language learning and the exemplification of such objectives

i) work on objectives should take place within the framework of a multi-dimensional model which takes account of the learner not only as a communicator but also as a learner, as a social subject and as a psychological being;

ii) when objectives are defined all four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) should be taken into account not only as a totality but also each of them separately, linked to the diversified needs of the target groups;

iii) the identification of other learning objectives should be pursued by considering other target groups and other levels of competence. In this respect, the unit/credit concept should be taken up again;

iv) a closer relationship should be established between needs analysis and the definition of objectives.

2. Continued pilot experimentation in communicative language learning

i) pilot experiments concerning a variety of languages and target groups should be continued ensuring coherence between needs analysis, the definition of objectives, methodology and assessment, within the framework of the systems approach of the project;

ii) information on both the negative and the positive aspects of the pilot experimentation should be circulated as widely as possible.

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3. Methods development

i) methodological models should be developed that allow for the diversification and flexibility of methods according to the characteristics of the target groups and contexts concerned;

ii) the educational implications should be examined of the relationship between the acquisition of modern languages and competence in the mother tongue; ways of providing integrated instruction in the mother tongue and second languages should be explored.

4. Examination and development of procedures for the promotion of autonomy in language learning

The paramount importance was noted of promoting autonomy in learning. This should entail in particular

i) the development of as wide a range as possible of methodologies leading to autonomy;

ii) the exploration of the possibilities and limits of all the possible tools of acquisition (mass media, computers, telematics) available to the learner;

iii) the creation of an environment furthering the autonomous acquisition and learning of languages;

iv) making available to learners and adviser-teachers aids enabling them to exploit the available tools of acquisition;

v) emphasising within training programmes and effectively conveying to governmental authorities the changing role of the teacher, particularly in adult and further education, from that of teacher to that of adviser/enabler.

5. Promotion of the development of multi-media systems for communicative modern language learning

It is suggested that priority be given to

i) a better definition of the role of each of the media in language learning;

ii) diversification of the media made available to learners;

iii) envisaging the development of multi-media didactic units enabling "a flexible exploitation of a variety of materials, with both sequentially ordered and exchangeable components";

iv) watching closely and encouraging the use of new technical systems and materials.

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D. INITIAL AND FURTHER TEACHER TRAINING

1. There is an urgent need for a great effort in in-service training for modern language teachers:
   - as a necessary part of the implementation of the findings of the Modern Languages Project;
   - as an area where cooperation between the member countries of the CDCC would be especially rewarding as far as the use of resources and experience is concerned.

2. Projects on the in-service training of teachers of modern languages should therefore be given high priority.

3. There should be close collaboration between teacher training institutions and teachers, involving regular contacts and visits to each other's institutions.

4. Within the new Project

   4.1. emphasis should be placed on in-service training (without neglecting initial training) as this may ensure the quickest way to reform;

   4.2. the CDCC should collect and disseminate information about the various systems of teacher training in the context of the educational systems which they serve;

   4.3. the CDCC should consider carefully the nature and consequences of the demand made on teachers by adherence to the basic principles of the approach advocated by the Council of Europe such as communicative language teaching, learner autonomy, learner-centredness. For instance

   - a research programme should be undertaken including the collection and production of desirable models of teacher training programmes, comparative studies in the field of modern language teacher training, and examples of good practice of communicative modern language teaching in various conditions
   - research should be conducted into ways in which teachers can best use native speakers, whether they be assistants, exchange teachers or foreign pupils in their establishments
   - the new Project should seek to arrive at definitions of what a language teacher should know and be able to do in order to put the communicative approach into practice. This might lead to some kind of specification of basic language teacher competencies for use in teacher training;

4.4. as proposed in the appendix to the consolidated report on the interaction network in the school sector (CDCC (81) 35) the CDCC should establish

- a newsletter as well as a series of publications
- a pool of in-service teacher training materials programmes, results, video-documents
- a European centre for research, teacher assistance and teacher education;

4.5. the CDCC should consider how to overcome the copyright problems involved in the reproduction for teaching purposes of topical material;

4.6. the CDCC should encourage international contact by

- facilitating international meetings of teachers and trainers
- providing experts for courses
- extending the programme of intensive visits established under Project No. 4, including teachers and teacher trainers
- encouraging the use of foreign assistants and the exchange of teachers and pupils.

5. For these purposes the Council of Europe will need a strengthened secretariat which is able to enlist the help of national institutions in order to carry out the various tasks.

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III. having regard to the implications of the Report Modern Languages: 1971-1981 and its own deliberations for the development of modern language teaching and learning in the member States of the Council of Europe or States having acceded to the European Cultural Convention

1. considered that

1.1. the principal aim of European policy in respect of modern languages is to facilitate communication and interaction among Europeans of different mother tongues in order to promote European mobility, mutual understanding and cooperation, and overcome prejudice and discrimination;

1.2. the rich heritage of diverse languages and cultures in Europe is a valuable common resource to be protected and developed, and that a major educational effort is needed to convert that diversity from a barrier to communication into a source of mutual enrichment and understanding;

2. considered that Governments of member States should accordingly be invited

2.1. to take the measures necessary to ensure, as far as possible, that all sections of their populations have access to effective means of acquiring that knowledge of the languages of other member countries (or of other communities within their own country) as well as the skills in the use of those languages that will enable them

2.1.1. to deal with the business of everyday life in another country, and to help visitors to their own country to do so,

2.1.2. to exchange information and ideas with young people and adults who speak a different language and to communicate their thoughts and feelings to them,

2.1.3. to achieve a wider and deeper understanding of the way of life and forms of thought of other peoples and of their cultural heritage,

and in particular

2.2. to promote, encourage and support the efforts of teachers and learners at all levels to apply in their own situation the principles of language learning systems construction (as these are being progressively developed within the Council of Europe Modern Languages programme) by

2.2.1. basing language teaching and learning on the needs, motivations, characteristics and resources of individual learners,

2.2.2. defining worthwhile and realistic objectives as explicitly as possible,

2.2.3. developing appropriate methods and materials,

2.2.4. developing suitable forms and instruments for the evaluation of learning programmes;

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2.3. to ensure that at least one European language other than the mother tongue or the vehicular language of the area concerned, should be taught to all pupils from the age of about ten (or earlier according to local or national exigencies) with an adequate time allocation and in such a way as to enable them by the end of the period of compulsory schooling, within the limits set by their individual ability, to use the language effectively for communication with other speakers of that language, both in transacting the business of everyday living and in building social and personal relations, on the basis of mutual understanding of, and respect for, the cultural identity of the other;

2.4. to make provision for the diversification of language study in schools by making it possible for pupils wherever appropriate, to study more than one European or other modern language and by ensuring the availability according to local circumstances of facilities for learning as wide a range of languages as possible;

2.5. to promote international contacts by individual pupils and classes through exchanges, study visits abroad and other means;

2.6. to ensure that these objectives are promoted by the available means of steering national educational policy such as national curricular guidelines, examinations and/or tests, development and recognition of learning materials;

2.7. to encourage the continuation of language learning by all students in full-time upper secondary, further and higher education as appropriate to their special fields of work and study in order to facilitate international professional mobility and cooperation at all levels. Educational institutions should offer facilities for this purpose;

2.8. to ensure that adequate resources are available to enable students who have completed their full-time education to acquire further knowledge of languages in accordance with their professional, social and personal needs and motivations;

2.9. to ensure that provision is made for adults who have had hitherto little or no chance of learning a modern language, to acquire the ability to use a modern language for communicative purposes;

2.10. to promote research and development programmes leading to the introduction, at all educational levels, of methods and materials best suited to enabling different classes and types of student to acquire a communicative proficiency appropriate to their needs;

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2.11. to promote the development and introduction of methods for the initial and in-service training of teachers of modern languages such as will enable them to develop the attitudes and acquire the knowledge, skills and techniques necessary to teach languages effectively for communicative purposes, for example by:

2.11.1. considering the extent to which the pattern of modern language studies in higher education provides an adequate preparation for future language teachers,

2.11.2. providing facilities through bilateral and multilateral agreements for every teacher in training to spend a substantial period of their course of study in a country where the language he or she will teach is spoken as a mother tongue,

2.11.3. contributing to an intensified programme of in-service teacher training including internationally organised, staffed and recruited in-service courses for language teachers and making it possible for practising teachers to take part in such courses,

2.11.4. promoting stays at regular intervals by practising teachers in the countries whose languages they teach;

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2.12. to ensure that adequate facilities are made available to members of ethnic minority groups:

2.12.1. to develop their mother tongues as educational and cultural instruments, and so as to maintain and improve their links with their country of origin,

2.12.2. to acquire the knowledge of the language of the host community sufficient for them to play a proper part in the working, political and social life of that community, and in particular to enable the children of migrants to acquire a proper education and to prepare them for the transition from full-time education to work;

2.13. to promote the introduction and development of appropriate initial and further training programmes for teachers of languages to migrants leading to recognised qualifications;

2.14. to participate in the development of language programmes involving cooperation between the host community, the migrant community and the country of origin, especially with regard to the production of teaching materials, teacher training and mother tongue development;

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2.15. to promote the national and international collaboration of institutions engaged in the development of methods of teaching and evaluation and in the production and use of materials, including institutions engaged in the production and use of multi-media material;

2.16. to encourage by all appropriate means, taking into account their particular status, radio and television bodies to cooperate with those in other member States in the planning, production and exploitation of modern language learning programmes as well as of documentaries on life, society and culture in the countries where the language being learnt is spoken;

2.17. to consider means of international cooperation for monitoring the quality of language teaching materials and courses;

2.18. to take the steps necessary to complete an effective European system of information exchange covering all aspects of language learning and teaching and research, and making full use of advanced information technology;

2.19. to ensure that government-sponsored programmes in the above areas are notified to the Council for Cultural Cooperation, and that such programmes contain provision wherever possible for consultation and cooperation between the agencies concerned and their counterpart in other member countries.

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